

The World of the Slavs

186* saying, to astound the world by her ingratitude. It is said that
 175 Nicholas I, towards the end of his reign, visited Warsaw and,
 648 standing thoughtfully in front of Sobieski's statue, said: 'That's
 668 the first of the fools who worked for the Habsburgs. And I was
 the second'.

175 It was in the thick of these racial tussles that the Slav peoples
 186 held their first conclaves. Bohemia, the most civilised of the
 668 Slav nations, was the first to extend her hand to her sisters. By
 way of a counter-stroke to the German Assembly in Frankfurt,
 the Slav Congress took place in Prague in June, 1848. Object:
 the establishment of periodical relations between the Slav peoples
 and the drawing up of a programme of action for such of those
 peoples as were subject to Austrian or Magyar domination. The
 language spoken at the Congress was German, then regarded as
 the Esperanto of the Slavs, thus enabling the Germans to claim
 the Slavs as belonging to their *Geistesleben*. This Congress,
 attended by three hundred and sixty-three members, under the
 chairmanship of the Czech historian, Palatsky, was divided into
 three sections: Russo-Polish, Yugoslav, and Czechoslovak.
 Whilst protesting its loyalty to the Habsburgs, it claimed, for the
 Slav populations, the rights and guarantees granted to the
 Germans and the Magyars. Outbreaks occurred in Prague after
 this meeting, and the manner in which they were repressed
 showed that the Slavs could not expect much from Vienna.
 Once more, the eyes of the Slavonic world turned towards
 Russia.

186 Bakunin, in his *Confession*, has left us a picturesque sketch
 668 of this Congress of Prague. He had pleaded the cause of the
 Russian revolution, and of the Federative Republic of all Slavs.
 'The Slavs', he said, 'are real children, but I have found
 among them an unbelievable freshness, and incomparably greater
 innate intelligence and energy than among the Germans. The
 Slavs' predominating sentiment is hatred of the Germans. The
 forceful, if not very polite, expression, "accursed German"
 ("proklatni Nometz") pronounced alike in nearly all the Slavonic
 dialects, has produced an incredible result in every Slav. . . .
 Hatred of the Germans formed the inexhaustible topic of all
 conversations; it served as a greeting between strangers. . . . As
 regards the Congress itself, it was, like all the other political

[i. Slav Congress, June 1848 - Analyst]

AND ITS RELATION TO MAGIC 171

Certain minor observances of conduct, which we have noticed throughout the so-called patriarchal zone, but which vary considerably from place to place, such as not crossing the feet, using right or left hand for certain operations, wearing certain colours, etc.—in short, at all times a care that everything be done in a way fitting to the conditions, according to some precise ruling of custom—exist because otherwise an evil force can be inadvertently put in motion, or a man work on himself or his associates some kind of auto-curse.¹ Particular care must be taken as regards children and domestic animals, who naturally cannot be expected to understand the importance of such observances, and must therefore be prevented from doing the wrong thing. Hence in part the arbitrary influencing of omens.

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'I fear to go to the four parts of the earth, and over the whole earth,' says the devil in a Greek manuscript (sixteenth century) when he descends to fetch earth for the creation of man. 'Therefore, he made a sign of the cross with his sceptre, saying: "East, west, north and south." Thereupon all the earth came before God.'

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The so-called Bogomil creation legend, slightly varied, occurs in Russia, Transylvania, in Dobrudja, in the Rhodopes, in Western and Southern Bulgaria, and right across the middle of the Peninsula, in Macedonia, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Eastern Serbia and in Old Serbia, and probably elsewhere. It is found in manuscripts from the twelfth century, in Old Bulgarian, Russian, Serbian and Bosnian books. On the one hand, there are versions similar to that of the Book of Enoch, the Vision of Isaiah, and the 'Secret Book' of the Bogomils. On the other, it links up a chain of cosmogonic myth shared by the Finno-Ugrian and Ural-Altaic peoples, and in the traditional version known to Slavonic folk-lore it is more like this latter.² It is of interest to note that an

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171¹ v. infra.² Similarities between Slavonic, Finnish and Central Asian cults and mythology first came to the notice of students of Russian custom, notably P. Jacobi and Prof. Aničkov. The latter's views are theories rather than

172 ELEMENTS OF A FOLK-CHRISTIANITY

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171 early Russian chronicle attributes a very similar cosmogony to Volhs (*magi*) at Kiev, long before the first traces of Bogomil apocryphal literature in Russia.

The fact of the matter is, that most of the apocryphal literature, important for creating a new source of popular legend in the Balkans—e.g. the Apocalypse of Baruch, Gospel of St Thomas, the Palaia, Vision of Isaiah, etc.—appeared in Slav versions, often markedly differing from any known Greek originals, as early as the eleventh century, and possibly before Bogomilism as such had established a popular hold or, at any rate, a literature of its own. To Jeremije, the Bogomil, is generally attributed the Slavonic version of the Elucidarium. Here, again, no exact Greek prototype can be discovered. Neither the devil's contract motif, nor that of his appearance over the primeval waters in the form of a diving bird, and other significant details, can be traced with any certainty beyond the Slavonic versions.

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779 Only on going westwards into Bosnia, it seems certain that the literary form preceded the popularised story. Otherwise, it is clear that the Slav writers of the Middle Ages made considerable use of popular sources, unaware of any inconsistency of doctrine, and tempering their material to taste. In the beginning, according to a Russian monastic writer of the seventeenth century, Almighty God resided in the three chambers of the upper heaven. 'The three chambers of the cross,' he says, in iconographical symbolism. 'The Emperor without beginning, uncreated, unspeakable, not born, not conceived, universal, invisible and unseeable, immortal and immaterial' was there before time. By his thought he gave birth to his Son. 'For the Father is neither created nor begotten, and the Son is begotten and not created. The Holy

substantial history; but there is documentation in his *Jazykstvo i drevnaja Rus* (1914), and in more recent articles in *Slavia* and *Revue des Etudes Slaves* (viii). More relevant theories are put forward by M. Arnaudov in Sb.N.U. iv. Older works include Spicyn, *Samanizm v otzelenii k russkoj arheologii*, Zapiski Arheolog. xi; V. Bogoraz, *K prikhologii samaritan* (Etnograf. Obozrenie, xxii, i), where traditions of the type given above will be found.

5: Kemp E-4, 5 (1926-1933)1935

EF6 Serbs

Historical Bulgaria EE2

Historical Yugoslavia EF2

Great Russians RF2
Slavic Peoples E 16

180 SOURCES OF ANCIENT MAGIC

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There is little trace of shamanism in the Balkans, and few instances of the combining of the functions of priest and doctor and magician except by accident. In peasant cults these offices are adopted to meet a special occasion, unless they are the speciality of a local wise woman. Women who have ceased to menstruate or widows may have to be chosen for certain rites, but this is only a temporary priesthood. The seeress mediates between ordinary people and spirits only when she is required to do so. Young men without physical defect only may be allowed to take part in certain ritual dances, etc. Almost each cult has its own 'priest'. The fulfilment of the village 'vows' and the sacrifice at the sacred village tree is performed by householders, and the high priest of the occasion is the host for that year. The mother of twins is, it is said, considered to be specially pure, and twins themselves have special occasional functions. I hazard that this arrangement is characteristic of peasant cults; and that the institution of a monopoly of priestcraft, whether on the part of the Christian church or by the priests of organised pagan cults, meant a profound social change, to uphold which popular custom had to be discredited.

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In Russia itself, so many parallels are found that a close

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feature of the religious life of South Slav Orthodox communities and has died hard among the non-Orthodox. It represents an elaboration under peculiar circumstances of a strictly domestic cult with occasional ministrants, whose sporadic priestly duties are determined by their normal social function and status. A similar Lithuanian rite was also traditionally a strictly domestic affair. The *slava* embraces ideas and ceremonial found in the earliest accounts of Slav custom and which belonged to pre-Christian ideas, but other features, and the general form as we now know it, so closely resemble the celebration of the liturgy that the institution may well have arisen from an early practice of private celebrations, or imitations of the liturgy, perhaps at a time of a Christian minority, or further encouraged by the conditions of Turkish occupation. There is still a tendency to think that anything that is not traceable to the Churches' institutions is necessarily pre-Christian in origin. The cycle of Christmas rites also shows a mixture of sources and evidence of late formation, and considerable local variety when the cycle of the whole season, which may include rites transferred from other seasons, is considered. In any case, the past is not always 'fossilised'. While a

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connection with Asiatic shamanism was suggested many years ago. On the whole, the characteristics of magical practice are better mapped regionally than ethnologically; the Russian and West Slavs falling beside the Baltic and Finnish races of the north; while Balkan Slav folk-lore more closely resembles that of the neighbouring southern races.

In the process of time a religious sentiment has grown up about the ritual inherited from ancient semi-magical rites; and direct magic, conceived as such, figures principally as a part of a medical system, in which, however, empiricism now predominates, and magic is applied rationalistically. This division between applied magic and religion, between charm worker and the priest, seems to have existed since early times.

The pagan cult, as far as can be judged, recognised innumerable local and tribal gods, associated with the various activities of the people, such as war, agriculture, etc., or representing personifications; and an equally important cult of trees, stones and waters, in which, according to some, gods or spirits were supposed to reign. The Slavs of the East could not swear by trees, fountains or stones (but the priests gave accused persons the choice of trial by ploughshare, iron or

custom can in any sense be said to live, though it come out of the past it is also a part of actuality and a factor of present-day life and psychology. The popular religion is more sophisticated, and probably greatly more varied than any reconstruction of primitive cults that could be made. It depends on the vigour of the church organisation locally how far a distinction is made between standard Christian practice and the rest, and how far the non-Christian part of tradition is looked upon as not wholly in conformity with the nominal faith. Left to itself the folk-mind blends diverse elements into a single law. Certainly custom, particularly religious custom, is not in origin a direct response to the physical environment. Adjustment to the demands of a ruling class, for instance, is not expressed only on the economic plane. But there is a tendency to try to adapt institutions—even those forced upon a community—to material circumstances. Hence the permeation of all peasant cults by the dominant interest in provision for life and the staying of disaster. The Church would have had little chance of survival here had its rites not received an economic and apotropaic interpretation, far removed from the spiritual benefits of its written doctrine.

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Slavie Peoples E16

Yugoslavia EF1

Croatia EF4

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earth. The roof is always of the saddle-type and is covered with tiles. In the old days, as it is said, the roofs were covered with thatch and wood. The roof is supported by coupled beams. Originally, the house was divided into two parts: the kitchen and the room».

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«It is characteristic, he says, to note the open fire-place at the kitchen wall, which is usually kept even after the kitchen has been made into a room. An iron stove is also used now. The house is usually approached through a covered terrace, occupying part of the front wall and supported by small arched pillars, that gives a very characteristic appearance to these buildings. In the old days, most of the houses had a balcony or a covered portico extending all along the front of the house. These disappeared in the course of various changes, but their traces can often be seen as yet».

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«The characteristic mark of the house is given by the fire-place, that is all black from the smoke of years. A chain hangs over the fire-place.... Also the bread is baked there; a big, semicircular cover is used for that purpose. This cover is placed over the bread, and live coals are placed over the cover which bakes the bread».

When further examining the architecture of the Croat villages, the Russian investigator finds «many common elements with the Eastern — Slav shapes — many more than with the Serbs and the Bulgars. The new houses are made of stone, but many old houses have remained which were not made of round bars but of adzed wood logs, or of wood planks, placed aslant. The ends of the logs protrude irregularly. Roofs are all of the eagle type and project from the walls very strongly. Most of them are covered with tiles, but there are some made of thatch. The one-storey houses prevail, and the plan of the house is very primitive. One can often see houses with only one room, but, as a rule, we see houses with two or three rooms. One of the rooms is called «hiza» (as the entire house), and the other, «hizitsa». If there is a third room, this is either an intermediate passage with a fire-place or a cellar... The most interesting point is that almost all the old houses have a petchka (stove) of about the same type as the Russian one. On the wall facing the stove and diagonally, we can see the ikons and photographs hanging there. This is similar to the Russian «good corner»... (p. 132).

The general conclusion Tokariof draws from his remarks on the architecture of the Balkan Slav peoples is particularly didactic. He says: «The popular architecture of the Croat village, near Zagreb, completely differs in its whole from the architecture prevailing in

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the Balkan peninsula. We find here a whole series of elements and conditions, entirely unknown to Serbs and Bulgars: buildings made of adzed wood, two sided thatch roof, Russian type of stove (petschka) instead of a fire-place (tzaki), «good corner» facing it, etc. Similar phenomena exist in Slovenia (see the works of A.N. Harouzin) but do not further to the South, over the Savo River. One is driven to think of a movement of civilization, from North to South that has probably some relation to the invasion of the Slavs. Further to the South, over the Savo and the Danube, this flow was exhausted and Slav colonists, who had reached more southward than all others, the forefathers of Bulgars and Serbs, assimilated some shapes of civilization that previously existed there (stone architecture, houses with fire-place, etc.). And the forefathers of Croats and Slovens, who do not belong to this vanguard of colonisation and did not go so far to the South, retained the ancient Slav building forms» (p. 132).

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Thus, from a mere examination of the forms of popular architecture the Slavonian ethnologist drew conclusions about the cross-breeding of civilizations on the Balkan peninsula and about the influence on it of «previously existing» forms of civilization that caused, as he says, the «exhaustion of the flow of civilization» (?) moving from North to South. The envoy of the Soviet Academy does not say, or perhaps does not judge necessary to say, what was exactly the character and the origin of this indigenous civilization that taught the Slav colonist vanguard higher forms of human habitation. But it is expressly proved that, while the Northern Slavs owe much of the important progress of their national house building shapes to foreign, and especially German, influences, the Slavs of the South, when developing the form of their rural and their urban house, had the Greek houses as a model before their eyes.